

through its representative, the General Counsel, or designee. The representative of the Postal Service, as designated by the General Counsel, shall file a notice of appearance as soon as practicable, and no later than the date for filing the answer. If a former employee has a representative, further transmissions of documents and other communications by and with the former employee shall be made through his or her representative rather than directly with the former employee.

[77 FR 65105, Oct. 25, 2012]

**§ 966.7 Answer to petition.**

Within thirty (30) days after the date of receipt of the petition, the General Counsel shall file an answer to the petition, and attach all available relevant records and documents in support of the Postal Service's claim, or the administrative offset schedule proposed by the Postal Service for collecting any such claim. The answer shall provide a clear and detailed description of the basis for the Postal Service's determination of the alleged debt and its calculation of the amount of the alleged debt and/or its proposed offset schedule, as appropriate.

[77 FR 65106, Oct. 25, 2012]

**§ 966.8 Authority and responsibilities of Hearing Official or Judicial Officer.**

(a) In processing a case under this part, the Hearing Official's authority includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) Ruling on all offers, motions, or requests by the parties;
- (2) Issuing any notices, orders, or memoranda to the parties concerning the hearing procedures;
- (3) Conducting telephone conferences with the parties to expedite the proceedings (a memorandum of a telephone conference will be transmitted to both parties). The Hearing Official's Memorandum of Telephone Conference serves as the official record of that conference;
- (4) Determining if an oral hearing is necessary, the type of oral hearing that would be appropriate, and setting the place, date, and time for such hearing;

(5) Administering oaths or affirmations to witnesses;

(6) Conducting the hearing in a manner to maintain discipline and decorum while assuring that relevant, reliable, and probative evidence is elicited on the disputed issues, and that irrelevant, immaterial, or repetitious evidence is excluded. The Hearing Official in his or her discretion may examine witnesses to ensure that a satisfactory record is developed;

(7) Establishing the record in the case. Except as the Hearing Official may otherwise order in his or her discretion, no proof shall be received in evidence after completion of an oral hearing or, in cases submitted on the written record, after notification by the Hearing Official that the case is ready for decision. The weight to be attached to any evidence of record will rest within the sound discretion of the Hearing Official. The Hearing Official may require either party, with appropriate notice to the other party, to submit additional evidence on any relevant matter;

(8) Issuing an initial decision or one on remand; and

(9) Granting reasonable time extensions or other relief for good cause shown.

(b) The Judicial Officer, in addition to possessing such authority as is described elsewhere in this part, shall possess all of the authority and responsibilities of a Hearing Official.

[77 FR 65106, Oct. 25, 2012]

**§ 966.9 Opportunity for oral hearing.**

An oral hearing shall be held in the sole discretion of the Hearing Official. An oral hearing includes an in-person hearing, a telephonic hearing, or a hearing by video conference. When the Hearing Official determines that an oral hearing shall not be conducted, the decision shall be based solely on written submissions. The Hearing Official shall arrange for the recording and transcription of an oral hearing, which shall serve as the official record of the hearing. The unexcused absence of a party at the time and place set for hearing may not be occasion for delay at the discretion of the Hearing Official. In the event of such absence, the